

## Message Text

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S E C R E T STATE 170852

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: EG, IS, PINR

SUBJECT: INTSUM 363 - JULY 21, 1977  
MOSCOW, KUWAIT, SANA FOR AMBASSADORS

LONDON FOR KINSOLVING  
NOT RELEASABLE TO FOREIGN NATIONALS

1. ISRAEL. MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT COALITION AND OPPOSITION PARTIES HAVE SHARPLY CRITICIZED THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PLAN ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER BEGIN PRESENTED TO PRESIDENT CARTER THIS WEEK. THE CRITICS SPOKE OUT DURING A MEETING EARLIER THIS WEEK OF THE DEFENSE AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE OF THE ISRAELI PARLIAMENT.

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2. THE ISRAELI PRESS HAS REPORTED EXTENSIVELY ON THE COMMITTEE'S DISCUSSION, WHICH WAS SUPPOSED TO BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL. THE LEAKS MAY PROVOKE A STRONG REACTION FROM BEGIN OR FOREIGN MINISTER DAYAN, BOTH OF WHOM ARE LIKELY TO FEEL EMBARRASSED AND UNDERCUT BY SUCH PUBLIC CRITICISM DURING THE PRIME MINISTER'S TALKS IN WASHINGTON.

3. COMMITTEE MEMBERS REPORTEDLY RESENTED BEGIN'S FAILURE TO DISCUSS HIS PLAN IN DETAIL AND TO SOLICIT THEIR REACTION AND SUGGESTIONS BEFORE HIS DEPARTURE FOR THE

US. SOME COMMITTEE MEMBERS, PROBABLY CONSERVATIVES FROM BEGIN'S LIKUD PARTY AND THE HAWKISH NATIONAL RELIGIOUS PARTY, CRITICIZED THE DOCUMENT FOR STATING THAT ISRAEL WOULD BE PREPARED TO WITHDRAW FROM PORTIONS OF THE SINAI AND GOLAN; THEY BELIEVED BEGIN SHOULD HAVE EXPRESSED ONLY A GENERAL READINESS FOR TERRITORIAL COMPROMISE WITHOUT GOING INTO ANY DETAIL. THERE WERE ALSO THOSE WHO FELT THAT WILLINGNESS TO PULL BACK IN THE SINAI SHOULD HAVE BEEN LINKED DIRECTLY TO THE CONCESSIONS ISRAEL HOPES TO OBTAIN IN TALKS WITH THE EGYPTIANS.

4. OTHER REPRESENTATIVES, PRESUMABLY FROM THE LABOR PARTY AND THE DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT FOR CHANGE, FAULTED THE PLAN FOR NOT EXPRESSING A WILLINGNESS TO WITHDRAW FROM AT LEAST SOME PARTS OF THE OCCUPIED WEST BANK AND FOR OMITTING ANY MENTION OF THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM. THESE MEMBERS FELT THAT SUCH OMISSIONS WOULD MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE TO RECONVENE THE GENEVA PEACE TALKS.(CONF)

5. LEBANON. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTHERN LEBANON REMAINS ESSENTIALLY UNCHANGED, WITH PALESTINIAN AND SECRET

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CHRISTIAN ARTILLERY DUELS CONTINUING ALONG THE ENTIRE SOUTHERN BORDER. GROUND ACTIVITY IN THE AREA HAS BEEN LIGHT OVER THE LAST FEW DAYS, WITH NO CHANGE IN DISPOSITION OF PALESTINIAN OR CHRISTIAN FORCES. THE FIGHTING IN BEIRUT, WHICH OCCURRED DURING THE NIGHT OF JULY 16-17TH HOWEVER, WAS THE HEAVIEST SINCE THE NOVEMBER CEASEFIRE, WHEN SYRIAN SUPPORTED SAJQA FORCES AND IRAQI-BACKED REJECTIONIST FRONT PALESTINIANS BATTLED IN THE VICINITY OF THE SABRA CAMP.

6. THE PREDOMINATELY SYRIAN ARAB SECURITY FORCE APPARENTLY KEPT CLEAR OF THE FIGHTING ON THE GROUND. HOWEVER, REPORTS INDICATE THAT IT PROBABLY PROVIDED MORTAR AND LIGHT ARTILLERY SUPPORT TO SAJQA FROM BEIRUT. THIS LATEST OUTBREAK OF HOSTILITIES HIGHLIGHTS THE CONTINUING TENSION BETWEEN THE REJECTIONISTS AND MODERATE PALESTINIAN FACTIONS; SIMILAR OCCURRENCES CAN BE EXPECTED.

7. MEANWHILE, SYRIA, THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT, AND THE PALESTINIANS HAVE REPORTEDLY AGREED IN PRINCIPLE TO WITHDRAW ALL COMBATANTS FROM THE SOUTHERN LEBANESE BORDER WITH ISRAEL WHILE LEAVING ONLY THE ARQOUB OPEN

TO THE PALESTINIANS. IN A MOVE TO IMPLEMENT THIS

AGREEMENT, THE FATAH CENTRAL COMMITTEE MET ON JULY 18 TO DISCUSS THE PLAN. THERE IS WIDESPREAD HOPE THAT A FINAL SETTLEMENT IS NOW AT HAND. THIS OPTIMISM WAS SPARKED BY A STATEMENT ON JULY 19 BY SALAH KHALAF THAT AN AGREEMENT HAD BEEN REACHED ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CAIRO ACCORDS.

8. WE BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT THIS OPTIMISM IS PREMATURE. DETAILS OF THE AGREEMENT HAVE YET TO BE WORKED OUT, AND HAVE PROVED TO BE STUMBLING BLOCKS WHEN AGREEMENT SEEMED NEAR IN THE PAST. A COMMITTEE OF REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE THREE SIDES IS EXPECTED TO MEET WITHIN THE SECRET

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NEXT DAY OR SO TO DRAW UP A PROGRAM FOR THE FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGREEMENT.

9. THE RIYADH AGREEMENT LAST OCTOBER CALLED FOR SUCH ACTION. BY JANUARY, IT APPEARED THAT ALL THE PARTIES--INCLUDING THE PALESTINIANS--HAD AGREED TO ITS IMPLEMENTATION. NEVERTHELESS, INTERNAL PLO RIVALRIES FORCED ARAFAT TO BACK OFF AND THEN TO CONVINCE THE KUWAITIS AND THE SAUDIS TO DROP THEIR SUPPORT. THE PROBLEM FOR THE PALESTINIANS IS THAT THE DOMINANT FORCE IN THE SOUTH IS REJECTIONIST AND NOT UNDER PLO CONTROL. THESE ELEMENTS HAVE NOT AGREED TO A WITHDRAWAL.

10. AT THE SAME TIME, NEITHER WERE ISRAELI-BACKED CHRISTIAN FORCES CONSULTED. THESE ELEMENTS ARE ALIENATED FROM THE BEIRUT GOVERNMENT BECAUSE THEY FEEL NEGLECTED. THEY BELIEVE THAT IN THE PAST THEIR INTERESTS HAVE BEEN SACRIFICED FOR THOSE OF THE SARKIS REGIME. THEY ARE LIKELY TO VIEW THIS NEW AGREEMENT AS MERELY ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF THE BEIRUT GOVERNMENT'S ACCOMMODATING THE PALESTINIANS BY INSTITUTIONALIZING THEIR PRESENCE IN SOUTHERN LEBANON. (SECRET)

11. EGYPT. EGYPT IS REPORTEDLY EXPLORING THE POSSIBILITY OF HAVING TWO MINEFIELDS, ONE EACH OFF PORT SAID AND DAMIETTA, COMPLETELY CLEARED OF ALL REMAINING MINES. BOTH FIELDS WERE SWEEPED BY U.S. NIMBUS STREAM PARTICIPANTS IN 1975, WITH NO DETONATIONS OCCURRING. WHILE BATTERY EXHAUSTION PROBABLY ACCOUNTED FOR THE LACK OF DETONATIONS (EACH FIELD WAS SWEEPED TO NINETY-NINE PERCENT PROBABILITY OF ACTUATION), IT WAS NOTED THAT A REMOTE POSSIBILITY REMAINED OF SPURIOUS DETONATION DUE TO RESIDUAL ENERGY IN DEPLETED BATTERIES, SECRET

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OR DUE TO PHYSICAL IMPACT SUCH AS MIGHT OCCUR DURING  
DREDGING OR IF A MINE SHOULD BE STRUCK BY A SHIP'S

ANCHOR. THE EGYPTIAN DESIRE TO HAVE THESE MINEFIELDS  
COMPLETELY CLEARED IS BELIEVED TO BE IN ANTICIPATION  
OF PLANNED OIL EXPLORATION IN THESE AREAS. (SECRET)

12. SYRIA, THE NINTH INFANTRY DIVISION REPORTEDLY CON-  
DUCTED A FIELD TRAINING EXERCISE ON THE GOLAN HEIGHTS  
JULY 16-18. IT IS THE FIRST KNOWN DIVISIONAL-LEVEL FIT  
BY THE SYRIAN MILITARY SINCE BEFORE THE 1973 WAR.  
THERE IS NO EVIDENCE TO INDICATE, HOWEVER, THAT THE  
MANEUVERS WERE INTENDED FOR PURPOSES OTHER THAN THE  
MAINTENANCE OF NORMAL MILITARY PREPAREDNESS. (SECRET/  
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